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ABSTRACT

Ideally, playgrounds should encourage development of gross and fine motor skills and present a stimulating play environment that provides children with manageable challenges. In order to provide these challenges, a balance must be found between risk and safety. Over the last few years there has been an increased interest in the use of soft surfacing underneath and around playground equipment, and there is now widespread agreement that adequate surfacing is required underneath and around all playground equipment from which a child might fall, in order to reduce the effects of those falls. This Australian/New Zealand Standard provides general requirements for surfacing to be used in children's playgrounds and specific requirements for areas where impact energy attenuation is necessary. It suggests the factors that should be considered when selecting a playground surface and gives a method of test by which the impact energy attenuation can be determined; this test gives a critical fall height for a surface that represents the upper limit of its effectiveness in reducing head injury. The Standard also gives a method for determining a head injury criteria (HIC) value, which is a calculation of the severity of a deceleration impact on the brain. Acceptable materials and depths for undersurfacing, and a guide to allowable fall heights from equipment onto such undersurfacing, can be determined by reference to HIC and g (acceleration into gravity at earth's surface) values. (EV)

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